



Private Music Instruction Policies and Student Handbook

Thank you for choosing Mason Community Arts Academy for your music lessons! We look forward to helping you develop your skills and further your love of music. The following are a few guidelines to ensure that you/your student has a positive and fulfilling experience with us.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

A productive learning environment and efficient use of time are key to a student's musical development. Here are a few guidelines for student behavior to ensure they find their greatest success and enjoyment in lessons:

- Students must be respectful and attentive to their instructors at all times.
- It is very important that students bring all necessary materials (instruments, music, assignment books, etc.) to every lesson.
- Students should follow daily practice expectations established by their instructor.
- Parental involvement in lessons is strongly recommended, but only required at the teacher's discretion. Please consult your teacher about the appropriate level of involvement if you have any questions.
- Families in waiting areas should be mindful and respectful of other lessons that may be happening nearby as sound travels easily into the lesson rooms.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

In order for all students participating at the Academy to have a rewarding, positive experience, certain conduct and behavior is expected. In the rare case that a student displays disruptive behavior and is a hindrance to the progress of their own instruction, as well as the instruction of others, and/or creates an unsafe environment for Academy faculty, administrators, and other students and families, that student (and parents of a minor) will receive a verbal warning. If the behavior continues, a meeting will be scheduled between the student/parents and the Executive Director. Continued disruptive behavior may result in dismissal from the program without refund.

The following are examples of unacceptable behavior that will not be tolerated and will cause disciplinary action to be taken:

- Any form of Physical Assault (Hitting/fighting/Causing physical harm)
- Verbal Assault
- Sexual Misconduct
- The Use of Profanity
- Disrespect to Staff and/or other students/participants
- Refusal to Cooperate
- Violation of Rules and Policies
- Possessing Weapons/Drugs/Tobacco

- Stealing
- Biting/Spitting
- Destruction of Property
- Bullying

SCHEDULING LESSONS

Our calendar for private lessons approximately follows the Fairfax County Public Schools Calendar. Students will register at the start of each semester for a specific lesson day and time agreed upon with their instructor. The Fall Semester typically begins the week before Labor Day and runs until the third week of December, and the Spring Semester begins week after New Years Day and runs until the second or third week of June (check the website for specific dates). When scheduling lessons for any semester, students/parents are committing to the full semester with a weekly lesson.

The Academy currently observes the following holidays and lessons will not be scheduled on these days:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Break (Wednesday–Saturday)
- Winter Break
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- FCPS Spring Break
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Fourth of July

The Summer semester is shorter in duration than the Fall and Spring (see website for specific starting and ending dates), and we encourage students to continue their studies during that period, if available. Students interested in Summer instruction must schedule a **minimum of 3 lessons**. Due to flexible Summer scheduling, there will be no makeup lessons or refunds given after the first lesson. See “Student Withdrawal” section for further details.

Payment must be received before lessons can begin for any semester. Please call the office to register and pay before your first lesson. Payment plans are available with a \$10 payment plan fee—please inquire about payment options at the time of registration.

PROGRAM FEE

All private lesson student tuition includes a program fee of \$35 per semester, or \$50 maximum per family, for the Fall and Spring semesters. This fee is not charged in the Summer.

ONLINE LESSONS

All in-person lesson policies also apply to online lessons, with additional technological requirements. All online lesson students must have access to a device with up-to-date audio/visual capabilities. This includes a computer (desktop or laptop), a tablet, or cell phone with a working camera and microphone. Zoom is George Mason University’s recommended platform for video/conference calls, although other

platforms may be used. More details on how to access the online meeting information will be provided to you at the time of your online lesson registration.

Recording lessons in any form is strictly prohibited without prior written consent from the student/parent (if a minor) and instructor.

MISSED LESSON POLICY

Weekly lessons and daily practice are essential to improve your skills and technique. Students are expected to attend every lesson. To ensure that you have the best lesson experience possible, students must adhere to the following policies in the event of a missed lesson.

If a lesson must be missed due to illness or a family emergency, two make-up lessons in the Fall and two make-up lessons in the Spring will be given, with sufficient notice. Notice must be given in writing to the instructor by 11 a.m. (EST) on the day of a weekday lesson, or by 7 p.m. (EST) on Friday for a Saturday lesson. There are no make-ups for missed trial lessons. Due to the flexible scheduling offered for the Summer semester, no make-ups will be given. **ALL** makeup lessons will be held on a virtual platform on a time and day offered by the instructor.

Students may request accommodations for religious holidays that are not observed by the Academy. For consideration, requests must be made in writing to academy@gmu.edu prior to the scheduled lesson date.

If a student misses a make-up lesson scheduled with the Academy and the instructor, then no additional make-up will be offered, and no refund will be given.

Any lessons canceled by the Academy or by the instructor will be made up and will not count toward the student's make-up limit.

If students arrive late, they may use the remaining time of their lesson with no refund or make-up offered. Instructors are not required to teach students arriving later than 15 minutes after the scheduled lesson time.

All requirements and guidelines from the Missed Lesson Policy also apply to online lessons. Students must call/be available as advised by their instructor at their regular lesson time each week. Faculty will make two attempts to contact the student. If a student is unreachable, this is treated as an unexcused absence.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Mason Community Arts Academy follows George Mason closure decisions for inclement weather. **We do not follow Fairfax County Public School closure decisions.**

In any closure event, we will contact registered students by email and will post closure announcements on our website and social media. To receive text message notifications on weather related closures, sign up for Mason Alerts at alert.gmu.edu.

In the event of an inclement weather closure, all in-person lessons will be moved online at the student's regular lesson day and time. The student's instructor(s) will be in touch prior to the student's lesson

time to confirm the online meeting information and any additional concerns for the lesson that date. All weekly online lessons will still proceed as scheduled.

LOCATIONS

In-person lessons scheduled Monday–Saturday will take place at the Academy facility at 4260 Chain Bridge Rd in Fairfax. Lessons are not offered on Sundays, and instructors are **never** permitted to teach lessons in a student’s home or in their own home. Online lessons will take place on the agreed upon virtual platform.

STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR COMMUNICATION

One of the most important aspects to your student’s musical and artistic success is a healthy, trusting relationship with their instructor. Communication between the student, the instructor, and the parents (if applicable) is vital to developing this relationship. Parents are encouraged to understand their child’s progress and the instructor’s expectations through regular communication with the instructor, while being able to assist with practice at home as needed. Parents should feel free to contact their instructor(s) directly with any questions or concerns they may have. Please consult with your student’s instructor about their preferred means of contact.

LESSON CONCERNS

Healthy communication promotes clear understanding and helps to alleviate conflict. However, if you ever have concerns about the way that you or your child’s lessons are progressing, please do not hesitate to contact the teacher first to work toward an agreeable solution. Most concerns are the result of simple misunderstandings and can be quickly and easily resolved with a phone call or a meeting. In the event that an issue is not easily resolved with the instructor, or you do not feel comfortable contacting the instructor first, please contact the Academy and communicate your concerns to our Private Lesson Manager. If it is determined that the student and teacher are no longer a good match, the Private Lesson Manager will be in touch with options for a new instructor.

STUDENT SEMESTER WITHDRAWAL

If a student is unable to continue lessons for the remainder of the semester, please contact both the Academy and the instructor to notify both parties of the student’s concerns and to request a withdrawal from private lesson instruction.

If the reason for the withdrawal request is due to the student having problems with their instruction or their instructor, we encourage them to speak directly with their instructor first to express their concerns. However, if after following the process above (see Lesson Concerns), and the student does not wish to continue with another Academy Instructor, but wishes to withdraw instead, please notify the Private Lesson Manager and follow the policies outlined below.

Withdrawal requests from private lesson instruction and all requests for refunds must be made in writing to the Academy via email to academy@gmu.edu. Verbal requests from students or parents will not be accepted. All registrations include a non-refundable \$50 registration fee. Payment plan and program fees are non-refundable. Refunds will only be made according to the following schedule:

- 100% refund (less non-refundable fees): Requests made at least one week prior to the first lesson

- 50% refund (less non-refundable fees): Requests made six or less days before the first lesson and up to six days after the second lesson
- No Refund: Requests made on the day of or after the second lesson.

SEMESTER WITHDRAWAL ELIGIBILITY

Only unforeseen circumstances will be considered for withdrawals from private music lesson instruction. These unforeseen circumstances may include:

- Major injuries and/or long-term illnesses that prevent the student from being able to properly use their instrument (A doctor's note will be required).
- Relocation out of the area due to unforeseen job-related changes.
- Family emergencies that alter the student's ability to continue lessons on a weekly basis for the remainder of the semester.
- Major concerns with the student's instruction or the instructor, that have been brought to the attention of the instructor and the Academy (following the steps above in Lesson Concerns) and have been determined by the Academy that the student and instructor are no longer a good match. The student may choose to continue with another Academy instructor or withdraw from private lesson instruction.

Circumstances that **will not** be considered for a semester withdrawal include but are not limited to the following:

- Changes in a student's schedule*
- Minor injuries and/or short-term illnesses that are expected to resolve before the semester ends**
- The student simply no longer wishes to have lessons.
- Previously planned relocation out of the area.

**If a student's schedule changes throughout any given semester, please contact the Academy and your instructor to discuss options that will work for both the student and the instructor for the remainder of the semester. If there are no convenient options for both parties, another instructor may be considered.*

***Minor injuries and short-term illnesses that prevent the student from having a select number of lessons within the semester will be eligible for a make-up lesson with the student's instructor. Please contact the Academy and your instructor to discuss options and to provide a physician's note detailing the student's need to refrain from lessons during that particular time. Once the student returns to weekly lessons after their injury/illness, options for make-up lessons or a refund will be provided by the Private Lesson Manager.*

Trial and Summer lessons are not refundable or able to be rescheduled.

RECITALS

We encourage all students to participate in the MCAA Winter and Spring Recitals on campus in the de Laski Performing Arts Building. It is very motivating to participate and prepare for a recital and is a fun experience as well. We hope you will take advantage of this great opportunity to perform in a professional venue equipped with a Steinway concert grand piano with an appreciative audience of

parents, friends and fellow students. A pianist is available to accompany all vocal and (non-piano) instrumental students. All students are strongly encouraged to work with one of our collaborative pianists, provided by the Academy, for the enriching musical experience it offers.

**Please speak to your instructor about registering for the semester recital to choose your repertoire and to determine if you should perform with a collaborative pianist.*

PARKING

Students taking lessons during the week at the Academy building may park in spaces reserved for the Academy for free with a semester pass from the office displayed on their dashboard. Please stop by and ask for a parking pass at your first lesson. Students with lessons at peak traffic times (between 4:30 and 7:30 p.m. should plan to arrive a few minutes early to find a parking spot. Additional parking is available in the back lot entrance to the Academy off West Drive. Students parking at the Academy must display a pass on their dashboard or may be subject to ticketing by George Mason Parking Services.

CONTACT

We welcome anyone to contact us with questions or concerns. Please call us at 703-993-9889 or email academy@gmu.edu.

WAIVERS

When you register for private lessons you agree to the following waivers from George Mason:

- I do hereby grant and give these groups the right to use my or my child(s) photograph/video or image, both singly and in conjunction with other persons or objects and presentations, advertising, publicity, and promotion relating thereto.
- To the best of my knowledge, I am/my child is capable of participating safely in the Program and that any activity restrictions, allergies, and medications are listed on this form. I give my permission to Program staff to provide routine first aid care and in the event of serious illness or injury, I give Program staff permission to seek and authorize emergency medical treatment. I agree to indemnify and hold harmless George Mason University, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and their officers, employees and agents, from any claim, damage, liability, injury, expense, or loss, including defense costs and attorney's fees, arising out of or resulting from said medical treatment. I further agree to accept full responsibility for any and all expenses, including medical expenses, that may derive from any injuries to my child that may occur during his/her participation in this Program. I understand and acknowledge that my failure to disclose relevant information may result in harm to Participant and/or others during this Program. By signing my name, I represent that I have provided all materials and important information to the Program pertaining to Participant's medical, mental and physical condition and that it is accurate and complete. I agree to notify the Program of any changes in mental, physical or medical condition before the Program begins.

**Note: Because we are part of George Mason, on occasion, Dewberry Family School of Music students may observe and/or assist the instructor with lessons or classes. This is for educational purposes only.*

Welcome to Mason Community Arts Academy!
Student Acknowledgement of Handbook Policies

Please sign at the bottom of this page and return it to the office, to be kept on file. Parent signature required for younger children.

I have read and agreed to all of the policies contained in the Student Handbook. I acknowledge that I will...

- Be on time for lessons.
- Schedule makeups directly with my instructor and only at the designated makeup times.
- Clearly communicate all concerns with my instructor directly.
- Pay the full tuition amount if I withdraw from private lessons after the third lesson of the semester.
- Abide by any of my instructor's individual lesson policies.
- Follow all of the behavioral expectations

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____